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Security Council

Sixtieth year

Provisional

5305th meeting

Tuesday, 15 November 2005, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Denisov	(Russian Federation)
Members:	Algeria	Mr. Baali
	Argentina	Mr. D'Alotto
	Benin	Mr. Idohou
	Brazil	Mr. Tarrisse da Fontoura
	China	Mr. Li Junhua
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Greece	Mr. Vassilakis
	Japan	Mr. Oshima
	Philippines	Mr. Mercado
	Romania	Mr. Dumitru
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. McKenzie Smith
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mrs. Taj
	United States of America	Mr. Brencick

Agenda

Security Council mission

Briefing by the Head of the Security Council mission to Central Africa

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05-60401 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council mission

Briefing by the Head of the Security Council mission to Central Africa

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Jean-Marc de La Sablière, head of the Security Council mission to Central Africa and Permanent Representative of France.

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

I should like to welcome the return of the members of the Council and of the Secretariat who took part in the mission to Central Africa.

I now give the floor to Mr. Jean-Marc de La Sablière, in his capacity as head of the Security Council mission to Central Africa.

Mr. De La Sablière (*spoke in French*): The Security Council mission that I had the honour to lead last week in five Central African countries was an opportunity to renew the Council's support for the process of peace and national reconciliation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Burundi.

First, on behalf of all the participants in the mission, I should like once again to thank the authorities of the five countries that we visited — the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Uganda, Rwanda and Tanzania — for the warm welcome that we received everywhere.

The report of our mission is available. Everyone can read it and become familiar with the recommendations that we have submitted to the Council. This morning, without going over it in detail, I should like to highlight certain points, particularly with regard to the main problems that we discussed with our interlocutors.

I shall first discuss our visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Everyone we met there believes that there is a momentum for transition. Everyone spoke with us about the desire of the Congolese to vote. In fact, according to the Independent Electoral Commission, the milestone of 20 million persons registered to vote has been achieved. Everyone is now looking towards the next votes — the referendum on the constitution on 18 December and the legislative and presidential elections — and the transition will end in less than eight months. That progress is commendable, as was stressed by the mission, but we also recalled that there are still significant problems to be resolved.

The first problem concerns the elections. The electoral timetable is tight. There has been some delay. The mission stressed to each of our interlocutors that it was essential that the voting take place on schedule. It is imperative that the date of 30 June 2006 be respected. The electoral law — an essential element of the operation — must therefore be considered carefully by Parliament. It must be promulgated the day after the adoption of the constitution, which — I repeat — is scheduled for 18 December. Then, it is essential that the elections be open to everyone. No one must be excluded or feel excluded from the process. In particular, measures must be taken to make up for the delays in voter registration in the provinces of Equateur and Bandundu. The Congolese authorities must also ensure that citizens are well informed.

The second problem is integrating the army and the police. Progress has been made in demobilizing ex-combatants and in restructuring the army and the police. However, that progress must continue and expand. We have asked the Congolese authorities to redouble their efforts in this area. In fact, the armed forces integration programme was interrupted after its first phase. Six brigades have been formed, whereas nine had been planned, to ensure security in the east. Our message, in keeping with our terms of reference, was that there was no more time to lose in starting the second integration phase. Moreover, measures must be taken to ensure that the new integrated brigades receive the equipment that they need. It is also essential that the Government pay the soldiers regularly and adequately.

The third problem is related to governance. Re-establishing State authority is more than ever a priority. It must be carried out with respect for the rule of law. Priority in the area of good governance must apply to the integrated brigades that I just mentioned and to the

adoption of the report of the European Union mission to provide advice and assistance for security sector reform in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The mission reiterated that point several times during its interviews, particularly with the head of State, Vice-President Ruberwa and the Minister of Defence.

I now turn to the problem of armed groups in the east, which was mentioned as a main topic of concern by all the heads of State with whom we met. In the eastern Congo, everyone — beginning with President Kabila — now recognizes that the presence of armed groups is a burden, particularly on the Congolese people. Today, it is the people who are the victims of violence, atrocities and plundering. There is an obligation to act, but the problem also exists for the neighbouring countries.

The Congolese forces, with the support of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), are now engaged in forceful action against the armed groups. These operations are courageous; I believe that they should be commended. Much was asked about this in our conversations. In Ituri, those operations are already permitting a stabilization of the situation. They have begun in the Kivus, particularly in Virunga Park. They must be continued.

We said to all our interlocutors that what the countries of the region must do, in the face of these armed groups, is to continue to strengthen their cooperation. Mechanisms already exist — such as the Tripartite Commission — and they should be utilized, particularly in order to exchange information. We recalled, in the clearest terms, the need for everyone to respect the sovereignty of neighbours. We also asked the Governments to ensure that the armed groups cannot receive cross-border support. The arms embargo must be respected. The illegal exploitation of natural resources, which finances arms trafficking, must no longer be tolerated.

In Burundi, we met a young Government, freshly elected and resolved fully to implement the reforms that were undertaken during the transitional period.

Three topics in particular predominated in our discussions. The first was the presence of the United Nations, which is now in question. Its support was decisive in achieving the transition in Burundi, as noted by the head of State and by all the officials with whom we met. But now that the transition has been completed, the question arises — quite naturally — of disengaging the mission, or of withdrawing at least its military presence. We spoke at great length with our interlocutors on this subject, and, according to my understanding, there was agreement on a gradual withdrawal. That is what the authorities of Burundi told us; that is the principle involved.

The United Nations and the legitimate authorities of the country, with full respect for the sovereignty of Burundi — as the mission frequently reiterated in its meetings — but also with a concern for peacebuilding, an issue that kept coming up in the subregion, must agree on a specific and concrete plan for gradual disengagement.

The second point relates to the role of the international community in the context of an exit strategy. There must be a successful transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding. Above and beyond the gradual withdrawal of the United Nations Operation in Burundi, we told the Burundian authorities that we wished to see a dialogue held, under the best possible conditions, with the international community, so that together we can find the best possible way of helping Burundi.

It seems to me that the Partners Forum, created in New York two months ago, is the obvious framework for such a dialogue. But we also believe — and this wish was unanimously expressed by the members of the mission — that the Peacebuilding Commission should be set up as quickly as possible. In our talks we often spoke of the benefits that Burundi could derive from the creation of the Commission.

Finally, there is the question of the Front National de Libération (FNL). This is a topic that everyone was thinking about; it came up in all our talks. There has been great disappointment in that respect. Perhaps it is not too late for the movement to join the peace process; some people still want to believe that that is possible. In any event, it is not acceptable for the FNL to engage in acts of violence against the new democratic institutions. We understand that the Government of Burundi remains open to the resumption of negotiations. The Security Council, for its part, last year expressed its readiness to consider the imposition of sanctions, and we reminded our interlocutors that that option was still available.

If I may, I should like, in conclusion, to make a few general comments — perhaps rather personal ones — about the work of the Council, which I have been prompted to formulate as a result of this visit.

My first comment is more general. The Security Council visited Central Africa this year for the sixth time. I believe that the members of the Council were motivated once again by a concern successfully to promote the peace process in a region to which stability and lasting peace must be restored; these are pivotal to its development.

The success of the peace processes in the region is important not only for its peoples, which have suffered so much; it is important also for promoting cooperation, on a solid footing, among the countries of the region. Such cooperation, in various forums and particularly in the context of the Great Lakes Conference, is crucial in the context of stability.

Let me add that the success of our common undertaking in Central Africa is of an importance that goes well beyond the subregional level; indeed, I think that it is important for the whole of Africa. That in itself explains the Council's having visited the region every year — for six years now, I believe. It explains the significant support provided by the international community for the process. We know that United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and the United Nations Office in Burundi have more than 23,000 women and men in the field. I believe that in both cases — and I think this is a positive element; certainly I found it reassuring — there is a clear-cut policy on the part of the international community, which is remarkably united in this regard.

Another cause for satisfaction is the fact that the Council's work is reflected in the field by ongoing diplomatic activities, held, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in the context of the International Committee to Accompany the Transition, which itself is a transitional entity. I say this because I think that this has more than just subregional significance. It can be applied to other crises — in Côte d'Ivoire, for instance, with the recent creation of the International Working Group.

One can see, therefore, that the Security Council, which has supported those groups, and very often has even created them, has been able to adapt and evolve. It is closer now to the field than it has ever been. I believe that this is a positive development. The fact that our colleague Kenzo Oshima went from Kinshasa to the Horn of Africa to help us better to assess the situation is an example of this evolution, which, I think, is something we should continue to promote.

Let me make one other general comment. Over the past few years, the scale and the mandate of MONUC have changed so as better to take into account the situation in the field and to remedy deficiencies and shortcomings. Today in Burundi we need, together with the authorities, to consider a gradual withdrawal. It seems to me that, with the assistance of the Secretary-General and of Mr. Guéhenno and his team, we should, whenever necessary, when a mandate is being renewed, really think about the changes that need to be made and what needs to be adjusted. Of course, we are not talking about change for change's sake. Very often mandates simply should be renewed unchanged. But it seems to me that we need to cultivate the Council's capacity for adaptation.

I would like to conclude by thanking my Council colleagues who took part in the mission for the trust that they placed in me throughout our trip and for their indulgence, even though very often — with their consent, of course — I set for them a very heavy workload.

On behalf of all members of the mission, I thank the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Council secretariat team, which was strengthened in order to carry out the mission and to meet the needs of security, logistics and communications. Without them, without Carolyn McAskie and Bill Swing, to whom we should pay tribute for their work, and without the teams assembled on the ground to assist the Security Council, we could not have carried out this mission successfully in the period of barely a week.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Ambassador De La Sablière for his briefing.

On behalf of the Council, I should like once again to express gratitude and appreciation to all the members of the Security Council mission, very ably led by Ambassador De La Sablière, for the manner in which they discharged their important responsibilities on behalf of the Council.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council will remain seized of this matter.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.